

Capitol Hill

The Capitol Hill station area is located at the southern end of the neighborhood's Broadway commercial district. This station area is characterized by dynamic pedestrian-oriented street-scapes, shops, cafes, and restaurants. This area of Capitol Hill is considered one of the most vital neighborhoods in the city.

Light rail would complement the existing pedestrian activity and compact residential development in the area. This particular area of Capitol Hill has the highest residential densities in Seattle. The City can take steps to ensure the maintenance of the existing environment by requiring new development to replicate this mix of uses and densities. Some adjustments in local zoning may be required.

SOUND TRANSIT ALIGNMENT AND STATION OPTIONS

The preferred alignment runs through Capitol Hill in a tunnel underneath Broadway. The Capitol Hill station is proposed for the area between East John Street and East Pine Street, although the exact site has not yet been determined.

EXISTING STATION AREA CONDITIONS

LAND USE AND HOUSING

Relatively few acres of the Broadway commercial district fall into the retail/service category, indicating that retail uses are compact. The predominant land use in the station area is multi-family residential housing. A variety of other uses are mixed in, including transportation fa-



View looking North along Broadway at E. Denny Way

cilities, office, and school uses. The major school use in the area is the campus of Seattle Central Community College (SCCC).

The average net residential density for the station area is approximately 47 units per acre, and the density of multi-family zones exceeds 60 units per acre. These represent some of the highest residential densities in the Seattle region.

TRANSPORTATION

The Capitol Hill station area is not as strongly oriented to pedestrians as the northern end of the Broadway commercial node. In this area, automobile movement is faster and more intense. East Olive Way provides a direct connection to Downtown, and Broadway serves as a direct link between residential neighborhoods to the northeast of Capitol Hill and First Hill/Downtown.

Capitol Hill Station Area – Existing Conditions, 1997¹	
Population	5,551
Employment	3,535
Median Household Income (1996)	\$ 26,334
<i>Residential Land Use</i>	
Total Dwelling Units	4,267
Density ²	
Single-family Zones	N/A
Multi-family Zones	61.6
<i>Commercial Land Use</i>	
Total Floor Area (sq. ft.)	3,814,858
Retail/Service	367,172
Office	152,153
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) ³	0.97
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² Dwelling units per net residential acre in specified residential zoning districts. Residential units in non-residential districts are excluded.	
³ Ratio of non-residential space per net acre of commercial and industrial land use.	

- *Pedestrian Corridors.* Major pedestrian routes are found along Broadway and on E. Olive Way/E. John Street. Major pedestrian intersections include the places where East John Street and East Denny Way cross Broadway. Also, areas around SCCC experience heavy pedestrian activity. Because the College straddles Broadway, heavy pedestrian activity and auto traffic are regulated at a major crosswalk.

- *Auto Routes.* Broadway and 12th Avenue E. serve as major north-south auto routes through the neighborhood. East Olive Way and E. John Street serve as a critical auto routes connecting Downtown with the eastern parts of the city along Lake Washington.

Community Issues

The *Capitol Hill Urban Center Village Draft Plan* identifies several key transportation issues of concern to the community. Issues focus on ways to encourage alternative modes of travel and to discourage auto use and parking in the neighborhood:

- *Number of Light Rail Stations.* How to select the number of light rail stations that should serve the community. Community members have debated about whether to build both the Broadway at Roy and Capitol Hill stations.
- *Transit Connections.* How to improve bus circulation and bicycle routes; and
- *Parking Supply and Management.* How to manage parking to provide better access for shoppers, students, workers, and residents.

1995 Metro Six-Year Plan

Broadway is already an important transit corridor, with King County's *1995 Six-Year Transit Development Plan* targeting Capitol Hill for improvements in transit services and facilities over the next several years. Capitol Hill is designated as both a transit hub and an employment target area. Several policies focus additional and improved bus service to the Capitol Hill area:

- *Designated Transit Hub.* The *Development Plan* establishes 44 transit hubs throughout the Seattle region, of which Capitol Hill is one. These transit hubs are targeted for service and facility improvements, depending upon service routes and transit frequencies (Strategy C-1).
- *Improved Commuter Access for Employment Centers.* Thirty-four (34) employment target areas throughout the Seattle region are identified and slated for improved peak-hour service, both for fixed routes and flexible routes. Broadway in the Capitol Hill area is identified as one of these employment centers (Strategy S-4).
- *Improved Bus Frequencies.* The frequency of buses will be increased along core routes. These include routes from Capitol Hill to Seattle Center and Downtown (Strategy S-2). Improved bus frequencies are helping to maintain Capitol Hill's connection to the Downtown area.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK

Pedestrian activity is very high in and around the Capitol Hill station area. Broadway, with its colorful storefronts, is thronged with pedestrians. The sidewalks are 10-12' wide. On-street parking and trees along the street buffer pedestrians from vehicular traffic. The streets in the residential areas are narrow, slowing vehicular traffic, and heavily-landscaped, creating a pleasant walking environment.

In the area west of Broadway, between Capitol Hill and Downtown, there are additional commercial uses and dense housing that could attract riders to the station. The steepness of the hill and proximity to Downtown may keep some people from walking away from Downtown and up the hill to catch a light rail ride to Downtown. Commuters may choose to walk downhill to work in the morning and take the light rail home in the evening.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The *Capitol Hill Urban Center Village Draft Plan* calls for specific infrastructure improvements that respond to community needs. In particular, improvements to sidewalks, pedestrian facilities, and open space along Broadway are necessary to keep up with the increasing pedestrian activity in the neighborhood. Specific recommended improvements include: wider sidewalks, streetscape improvements to celebrate Broadway's social scene (e.g., lighting, street trees, and banners), open space adjoining Broadway (particularly lidding of the Lincoln reservoir to create additional park land), and open space at the station site.

URBAN DESIGN FEATURES

The Capitol Hill station area encompasses the southern end of the Capitol Hill commercial district, as well as residential areas to the east and west.

- *Seattle Central Community College.* The SCCC campus, which straddles Broadway, forms the southern edge of the station area and generates substantial pedestrian/bus traffic at the East Olive Way crosswalk in spite of the campus's minimal streetscape amenities and bleak 1960-1970 architecture.
- *Mixed Use Commercial Areas Along Major Streets.* Mixed use commercial uses flank Broadway, East Olive, and E Pine Street. The uses serve the adjacent residential areas, providing opportunities for pedestrian activity, and functioning as the center of the Capitol Hill area.
- *Surrounding Residential Neighborhoods.* Residential areas that surround Broadway are varied in density. The busy cross streets (e.g., East Olive, East John) link the residential neighborhoods to downtown. These streets, along with Seattle Central Community College and the mixed use commercial areas along Broadway, East Pine, and East Olive form the edges between individual neighborhoods. East of the station site, in the narrow zone between Broadway and 12th Avenue, the housing is in transition from single- to multi-family.
- *Urban Open Space.* The Bobby Morris Park and reservoir are located to the east of the station site, providing the only open space in a mostly developed area.

Visual Landmarks

Visual landmarks include Lincoln Park Reservoir (to be redeveloped as Cal Anderson Park), Seattle Central Community College, and the vibrancy of the Broadway commercial district.

Views

Views in the Capitol Hill station area tend to be in the foreground and include streetscapes and interesting storefronts.

RECENT MARKET TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

MARKET CONDITIONS

The Capitol Hill station area has a stronger residential market than commercial, demonstrated by low vacancy rates and rapidly increasing residential land prices. In contrast, commercial land prices are high, but increasing more slowly. This trend is consistent with other nearby station areas, including Broadway at Roy and First Hill.

The strength of the Capitol Hill residential market is explained by the fact that the area is considered a very desirable place to live. The largest single land use category in the area is multi-family residential, suggesting that additional residential development may be successful in the station area.

Capitol Hill Station Area – Market Conditions¹	
Rents and Vacancy Rates	
Apartment Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 1.03
Apartment Vacancy Rate	1.3%
Office Rents (sq. ft.)	N/A
Office Vacancy Rate	N/A
Trends in Land Prices²	
Commercial Lots	2.6%
Single Family Lots	8.1%
Multi-family Lots	5.0%
Active Permit Applications	
Housing Units	53
Commercial Space (sq. ft.)	2,000
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² 1985-95 average annual increase, based on sales prices recorded by King County Assessor and reported by zone category.	

RELATIVE STRENGTH OF DEVELOPMENT MARKETS IN THE CAPITOL HILL STATION AREA

Housing has the greatest market potential in the Capitol Hill station area, based on existing land uses and market trends. Neighborhood retail also has the potential to attract new investment. Office development is seen as having less potential in this station area.

Capitol Hill Station Area – Relative Market Strength¹	
	Ranking (5 high, 1 low)
Housing	4
Retail	3
Office	2
¹ Indicates relative strength of market type of station area, compared to other potential station areas. Ranking is based on rents, employment levels, vacancy rates, land values, recent development activity, stakeholder interviews, field observations, and other information.	

Redevelopment potential is the greatest for specific single-family home sites zoned for multi-family development.

- *Residential Redevelopment East of Broadway.* Residential redevelopment has the highest potential in the half-block area east of Broadway and north of the Lincoln Reservoir, where residential uses back up to commercial uses. The park uses to be built over the Reservoir by 2000 will be a prime amenity for future multi-family infill development. Unfortunately, with busy 12th Avenue only one block away, there is less opportunity to create a strong residential enclave nearby.
- *Residential Redevelopment West of Broadway.* This is a fairly solid multi-family area, with some opportunity sites near Olive Way.
- *Commercial Redevelopment.* Commercially-zoned opportunity sites near the station site include a drive-in burger restaurant and a drive-through bank and dry cleaners.
- *Seattle Central Community College Projects.* The SCCC master plan calls for a new library to be located at Broadway and Howell and a 250-stall addition to the existing garage at Pine Street. Both projects are dependent on state funding.

EXISTING PLANS AND ZONING

PLANNING CONTEXT

The Capitol Hill station area is located in the southern portion of the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village and a small portion of the Pike/Pine Urban Center Village. Capitol Hill is a dynamic urban neighborhood with thriving commercial districts and the highest-density residential areas in Washington State. The Broadway commercial district bisects the station area. The predominant use in the station area is multi-family residential development. Seattle Central Community College, Lincoln Reservoir, a park, and playfields are other major land uses in the station area.

ZONING

Zoning in the Capitol Hill station area allows for multi-family, neighborhood-oriented retail, and mixed use residential. The Broadway commercial area and the commercial areas along East Pine Street, Olive Way, and 12th Avenue E. are zoned NC3, which allows a wide variety of general commercial uses, including auto-oriented sales and services.

Areas west of Broadway are zoned for MR mid-rise multi-family residential uses. This zoning has allowed some of the most dense housing development in the city outside of Downtown. Select areas immediately east of Broadway, including a three-block area currently being used as a park, are zoned for L3 low-rise residential development.

The Major Institutional Overlay district (over predominantly NC3 base zones) applies additional regulations to development on the SCCC campus.

Capitol Hill Station Area – Potential Development Under Current Zoning Regulations¹		
	<i>Commercial (sq. ft)</i>	<i>Residential (units)</i>
Existing Development	3,814,858	4,267
Additional Potential Development under Current Zoning Regulations ²	443,135	1,556
TOTAL	4,257,993	5,823
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.		
² Potential development capacity is based on City of Seattle GIS database and Scenario 2 in the “Zoned Development Capacity” background paper.		

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN ISSUES

The *Capitol Hill Urban Center Village Draft Plan* proposes a number of rezones, including several pertinent to the Capitol Hill station area:

- Proposed downzoning (Low-rise 3 to less dense low-rise zoning) for the residential area east of Broadway approximately between Roy and Denny;
- A height increase (45 to 65 feet) on Broadway between Thomas and Denny; and
- A zoning change (L3 and L3/RC to NC3/40 and NC /R40) for the backsides of the blocks facing Broadway on the east.

Some stakeholders have questioned whether the neighborhood plan’s rezoning proposals adequately address station area opportunities, particularly the proposed downzone east of the Capitol Hill station site.

The *Plan* also states that neighborhood-specific design guidelines are to be developed to help Broadway commercial uses relate better to residential streets and to help future SCCC development fit in better with the surroundings.

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

The community wants to maintain the neighborhood's existing character as a dense, thriving, diverse urban center with a mix of uses and lively street activity. Stakeholders generally support increases in density, mixed use development, and pedestrian facilities as ways to preserve and enhance the neighborhood character.

Nevertheless, stakeholders have a variety of opinions about the specific location and character of new development. For example, some community members would prefer to focus development at the Broadway at Roy station; others would prefer to see development at the Capitol Hill station. Specific comments from Capitol Hill stakeholders include:

- *Increased Residential Density.* “We need high density residential at the stations.” “Housing is needed within the station area walking shed. Multifamily zoning is important.”
- *Mixed Use.* “Rail should be used to attract conveniences to support the residential community near the station. Make services convenient to support the pedestrian (car-less) lifestyle.” “We want to emphasize retail along Broadway to support the pedestrian character. The upper levels are natural for housing.”
- *Pedestrian Network.* “If we are increasing the number of people in the area, the public amenities should come with it: pedestrian amenities like sidewalk repair; transit connections; safety and lighting; and completion of improvements to Bobby Morris Park and the reservoir lid.”
- *Urban Design.* “Adjacent to SCCC, we need to ‘knit the streetscape together.’ Now there are parking lots, detached building frontages, interrupted streetscapes.”

STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY SITES

The Capitol Hill station area has 144 parcels and almost 17 acres of land available for development. These represent vacant and underutilized parcels.

Zoning for Opportunity Sites

Most opportunity sites are found in L3, NC3, and MR zones located adjacent to the Broadway commercial district. These zones would allow great potential for multi-family development, particularly low-rise in east of Broadway and mid-rise west of Broadway. Mixed use development would be possible in any NC3 zone, which represents approximately 4.4 acres of the total opportunity sites.

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

Opportunity sites are typically small in size, averaging 0.10 to 0.16 acres in the L3 zone and 0.12 acres in the MR zone. Ideally, residential development would fill in these small parcels and create a compact pattern of urban development. However, it is uncertain whether the local real estate market can support development on such small parcels.

Pedestrian-oriented development and mixed use may be supported in the local residential market. The existing urban form and land use patterns already allow for walking throughout the neighborhood, and commercial uses and residential uses are located within walking distance. Building housing over ground-floor commercial uses would be compatible with the existing neighborhood. The main barriers to pedestrian-supportive development are aspects of the zoning regulations.

Capitol Hill Station Area – Opportunity Sites by Zoning Designation¹		
	<i>Parcels</i>	<i>Acreage²</i>
L-3	62	5.98
L-3.RC	14	2.23
NC3-65	10	1.60
NC3-40	23	2.75
MR-RC	4	0.50
MR	30	3.71
MIO-105-NC3-40	1	0.18
TOTAL	144	16.94
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.		
² Based on City of Seattle GIS database.		

NC3 zones allow incentives for mixed use, but because these provisions are applicable throughout the zone, they do not focus incentives to sites with better transportation access. A developer would have no reason to develop closer to a transit station. In addition, NC3 zones offer flexibility in the types of commercial uses allowed, and transit-oriented development may require additional restrictions on auto-oriented uses.

STATION AREA FORECASTS

Three different forecasts were developed for the new population, employment, dwelling units, and commercial floor area that will be added to the station area by 2020:

1. “Without light rail transit;”
2. “With light rail transit, but without supportive land use policies;” and
3. “With both light rail transit *and* supportive land use policies.”

POPULATION AND HOUSING

As with the Broadway at Roy station area, the PSRC Trends forecast and the *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation forecasts differ in this station area by a factor of almost ten. While the *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation projects 739 units, the probable baseline is for 300 new dwelling units housing 450 people. There are existing permit applications to build 53 units of multifamily housing in the Capitol Hill station area. Given the demand for housing in this area, more units could be built if developers find adequate sites for multi-family development. As with other nearby station areas, the introduction of “rail by itself” will add an amenity that will tend to increase the demand for housing in the area on the order of 5%. Since demand for housing is already high, however, it is unlikely that rail on its own will spur additional development. Site availability and other constraints limit the current development of the area. With “light rail only,” the Capitol Hill station area would have 320 new units in 2020, adding 480 residents to the area.

EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCIAL FLOOR AREA

The two forecasts range between 329,000 and 354,000 square feet of new commercial floor area over the next twenty years; the midpoint is an additional 340,000 square feet of commercial space, representing a 10% increase over existing conditions. The station area currently exhibits many features of a transit-oriented area, including a mix of retail, office, and housing at densities of over 45 units per acre. By improving transit access with a light rail station, a total of 357,000 square feet of new office/retail space and 1,190 new employees would be added to the area by 2020.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL

“Rail without supportive policies” will likely increase the multi-family housing and retail uses in the station area on the order of 5%. Given the existing transit-orientation of the area and good pedestrian links, rail by itself would tend to create similar development with a greater concentration in the immediate vicinity of the station. Demand for housing in this neighborhood is strong because of its proximity to Downtown and urban amenities. Given the constraints on available sites for development, however, the effect of “light rail without supportive policies” would likely be minimal.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL WITH SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

The potential development strategies for this station area focus on providing incentives in the zoning code for mixed use transit-oriented development, developing a parking management plan, and exploring a development partnership with SCCC. These strategies, combined with expedited permitting and SEPA clearance for transit-oriented development projects, could boost the development of opportunity sites to approximately one-half of their zoned capacity. This level of development would result in 290 additional dwelling units in the station area. Given the constraints on capacity and the strong retail presence in the station area, however,

supportive strategies would not have a strong impact on non-residential floor area beyond what is in the “rail only” forecast.

Capitol Hill Station Area – Market Forecasts, 1997-2020¹				
	<u>1997</u>	<u>1997-2020 Growth</u>		
		<i>Without LRT</i>	<i>With LRT Only</i>	<i>LRT and Supportive Policies</i>
Population	5,551	450	480	885
Dwelling Units	4,267	300	320	590
Employment	3,535	1,130	1,190	1,190
Commercial Floor Area ²	3,815	340	357	357

¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.

² Square footage (in thousands); includes commercial, industrial and institutional space, but excludes Sound Transit facilities and public facilities.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Potential development strategies for the Capitol Hill station area focus on creating a high-density, mixed use node around the transit station that complements existing uses. Higher density development, parking management, and coordinated local transit service can all support transit use. The overall approach for development strategies can be summarized as follows:

- *Increased Density.* Adequate zoning and height increases on Broadway can support use of the light rail system. The neighborhood has been considering upzoning around the reservoir – specifically, increasing L3 on the eastern edge to Mid-rise and NC3 40 on western edge to NC3 65. These actions may be linked to housing affordability. In addition, a transfer of development rights program may have potential, with Pike/Pine providing the sending sites and including existing low-income housing projects.
- *Pedestrian Connections.* Potential expansion of the Broadway POZ can potentially support use of the light rail station. Streetscape improvements and lighting can also help provide better pedestrian access. Bus circulation can be improved without adversely affecting pedestrian streets.
- *Parking Management.* Parking maximums and reduced standards near the transit station can help control the availability of parking and, therefore, encourage non-automobile modes of travel. Shared facilities for retail and institutional uses may be possible as well. There has been strong interest in the Pike/Pine area for reducing or eliminating parking requirements for residential use and, to a lesser extent, in Capitol Hill as well. These could be supported as station area development strategies.

The table of potential development strategies on the next page shows high-priority and recommended actions for the Capitol Hill station area. Because the local real estate market is strong, it may not be necessary to use economic assistance or pilot projects to stimulate development. Coordination with SCCC’s campus and institutional planning, however, can inform station area planning.

Potential Development Strategies: Capitol Hill (9)

Strategy	Potential Action	Comments
Land Use Tools	●	<i>Consider limited rezoning on key vacant parcels; recognize neighborhood interest in height increase on Broadway between Thomas and Denny.</i>
Pedestrian Network	✓ / ?	<i>Existing POZ on Broadway and Olive; potential expansion can support TOD. Provide streetscape improvements, including lighting.</i>
Parking Management	●	<i>Comprehensive program needed, with parking maximums, off-site provisions, and reduced requirements for residential uses. Shared facilities for retail and institutions; SCCC parking controls.</i>
Economics/Financial Assistance	?	<i>Provide for affordable housing proposed as part of mixed-use TOD and in multi-family zones.</i>
Regulatory Process	?	<i>Provide expedited review/SEPA clearance for TOD projects.</i>
Local Transit Service	●	<i>Improve bus circulation without adversely affecting pedestrian streets or east/west bus service, especially serving Group Health.</i>
Development Partnerships	●	<i>Further planning needed for SCCC expansion in north lot.</i>
Pilot Projects	○	<i>Further planning needed (e.g. use of Bonney-Watson parking lot for station construction staging; rebuild with shared parking in mixed-use project).</i>

- ✓ = Supportive Policy/Program in Place
- = High Priority Action
- = Recommended Action
- ? = Further Study Required

- TOD = Transit-Oriented Development
- POZ = Pedestrian Overlay Zone
- RPZ = Residential Parking Zone

First Hill

The First Hill station is located in the Madison Street commercial district, near Seattle University and several medical institutions. Although Madison Street supports pedestrian activity, it has heavy traffic volumes with narrow sidewalks and a steep hill west of Terry Avenue.

Given the compact mix of uses, this station area has the potential to support additional pedestrian activity and transit use. The City can take steps to ensure that new development continues the existing pattern of high-density, mixed use development. Improvements to street-scapes and pedestrian facilities can help create an environment that is more conducive to walking and transit use.

SOUND TRANSIT ALIGNMENT AND STATION OPTIONS

The preferred alignment between the University District and Westlake Station includes a tunnel under First Hill and Capitol Hill. A First Hill station will be underground in the vicinity of East Madison Street (between Minor Avenue and Broadway) at the foot of the Swedish Medical Center tower.

EXISTING STATION AREA CONDITIONS

LAND USE AND HOUSING

Land uses in the First Hill station area consist predominantly of school uses on the campus of Seattle University and parking. Medical and multi-family uses also represent significant land uses in terms of the number of acres occupied. Although Madison Street has a lively commer-



Intersection of Broadway and Madison at Seattle University.

cial node with a variety of stores, retail uses occupy less than four acres of the station area, indicating a compact urban form.

First Hill has moderate to high residential densities, although densities do not reach as high as those of the Downtown or Capitol Hill station areas. Average net density for the station area is approximately 29.5 units per acre, with the most dense multi-family residential areas reaching approximately 37 units per acre.

TRANSPORTATION

The First Hill station area is strongly-oriented to pedestrians, but its proximity to Downtown also attracts a great deal of auto traffic to and through the neighborhood. Madison Street provides a direct connection to Downtown, and Broadway connects to Seattle Central Community College, neighborhoods to the south, and residential neighborhoods northeast of Capitol Hill.

- *Pedestrian Zones.* Whereas pedestrian activity in Capitol Hill is focused on one major street (Broadway), pedestrian movement in the First Hill station area covers several blocks across two distinct street grids and connects the Madison Street commercial and medical areas with Seattle University. The area north of Madison, between Broadway and Boren Avenue, is a major pedestrian zone with commercial and multi-family uses.

First Hill Station Area – Existing Conditions, 1997¹	
Population	3,756
Employment	14,073
Median Household Income (1996)	\$ 22,993
<i>Residential Land Use</i>	
Total Dwelling Units	2,924
Density ²	
Single-family Zones	N/A
Multi-family Zones	37.3
<i>Commercial Land Use</i>	
Total Floor Area (sq. ft)	10,052,932
Retail/Service	166,543
Office	2,190,143
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) ³	2.33
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² Dwelling units per net residential acre in specified residential zones. Residential units in non-residential zones are excluded.	
³ Ratio of non-residential space per net acre of commercial and industrial land use.	

- *Auto Routes.* Like East Olive Way in the Capitol Hill station area, Madison Street serves as a critical link between Downtown and the neighborhoods to the east. Boren Avenue is also a critical route, linking the area to Interstate 5.

Community Issues

The *First Hill Phase I Neighborhood Plan* identifies several primary transportation needs. One is connecting the neighborhood to surrounding areas because the neighborhood is currently isolated by irregular street patterns, highway alignments, and topography. In addition, the community is concerned with improving local circulation for non-auto modes of travel. Specific issues include:

- *Pedestrian Connections.* How to improve pedestrian safety and convenience to, from, and within institutional campuses and for pedestrians along and across key pedestrian streets, crossing arterial streets, and moving north-south across traffic.
- *Connection to Other Neighborhoods.* How to improve north-south access.
- *Alternative Modes of Travel.* How to expand and maximize non-auto options.
- *Traffic Management.* How to (1) manage “local” traffic, especially the traffic generated by First Hill’s major institutions; (2) reduce traffic speeds on neighborhood streets; (3) reduce use of neighborhood streets by “cut-through” traffic; and (4) manage through traffic en route to and from Downtown and I-5.

Following a 1996 survey that identified parking, business visibility, and congestion as the top three concerns of Madison Street businesses, the Seattle Transportation Department conducted a parking management study in the neighborhood. (*Parking Management Study for First Hill (Draft), Seattle Transportation (SEATRAN), May 12, 1998.*) The study recommends policies that range from parking enforcement to a parking tax to car-sharing ideas. Neighborhood planners are currently studying these recommendations.

1995 Metro Six-Year Plan

The First Hill station area is already an important transit corridor, with King County’s *1995 Six-Year Transit Development Plan* targeting First Hill for improvements in transit services and facilities over the next several years.

First Hill is designated an employment target area, and as a result, will experience improvements in transit service. Thirty-four (34) employment target areas throughout the Seattle region are identified and slated for improved peak-hour service, both for fixed routes and flexible routes (Strategy S-4).

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK

Although the First Hill station area has heavy automobile traffic (on Madison, Broadway, and Boren, in particular), it also accommodates significant pedestrian traffic along Madison Street around the hospitals and along Broadway north of Madison. Seattle University provides several pedestrian connections to both of these streets.

The Madison Street sidewalks drop to the east and west of the potential station site. Currently, pedestrian traffic declines sharply along the western edge of the station area, as First Hill descends steeply toward Downtown. The slope down to Broadway is not as steep, but may still serve as barrier to some potential transit users.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

According to the *First Hill Phase I Report*, the neighborhood is particularly lacking in the types of basic pedestrian facilities that would be conducive to walking and transit use. The neighborhood plan notes the need for wider sidewalks, additional marked crosswalks, street and sidewalk maintenance, adequate lighting, and more bus shelters. Open space or a park integrated into the station design should accommodate the pedestrian nature of the area. According to the *Phase II Preliminary Recommendations*, the highest priority is to improve all key Pedestrian Streets.

URBAN DESIGN FEATURES

The First Hill station area includes two major destinations, Seattle University and the hospital area. The Madison Street commercial node links these two uses with areas zoned for high-density residential development in the southwestern portion of the station area.

- *Hospital Area.* South of Union and west of Broadway, the station area is dominated by Seattle's hospital district, with two major hospitals and related medical services. Harborview Hospital is located just outside the station area. Many of the medical buildings are tall, and the streets are busy, giving the area a very urban character. There are also a number of high-rise residential buildings, churches, parking structures, and several historic mansions in the area.
- *Seattle University.* East of Broadway, the station area is occupied primarily by Seattle University's low-scale buildings and pleasant pedestrian corridors.
- *Commercial District.* The Madison Street commercial district is a mix of shops that serves the surrounding institutional/residential uses and connects to additional retail uses along Broadway.
- *"Alternative" Commercial District.* North of East Union Street and Madison and east of Broadway, the urban character is transitional with pedestrian-scale commercial uses and thriving "alternative" stores nestled between dilapidated buildings.

Visual landmarks

The First Hill station area is dominated by high-rise medical buildings. The Sorrento Hotel, one of Seattle's oldest and most romantic hotels, opens an elegant courtyard to the southeast. Nearby apartment towers built in the 1920's offer dramatic views of Downtown and Elliot Bay. To the west, the twin cathedral spires of St. James Cathedral mark the skyline. To the east is the small campus of Seattle University.

Views

Although the station area is located at the top of First Hill, views from the street are obscured by medical buildings. The best views are in the foreground – in the pleasant landscaping and architecture of Seattle University and in the residential character and landmark structures found on side streets.

RECENT MARKET TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

MARKET CONDITIONS

The First Hill station area has a stronger residential market than commercial, demonstrated by its low residential vacancy rates and rapidly increasing land prices. In contrast, commercial land prices are increasing more slowly, although permit applications suggest that commercial activity is occurring. This trend is consistent with other nearby station areas, including Broadway at Roy and Capitol Hill.

The strength of the First Hill residential market is explained by the fact that it is considered a very desirable place to live, due to its proximity to Downtown and its attractive neighborhoods.

First Hill Station Area – Market Conditions¹	
Rents and Vacancy Rates	
Apartment Rents (sq. ft.)	\$ 1.03
Apartment Vacancy Rate	1.3%
Office Rents (sq. ft.)	N/A
Office Vacancy Rate	N/A
Trends in Land Prices ²	
Commercial Lots	2.6%
Single Family Lots	8.1%
Multi-family Lots	5.0%
Active Permit Applications	
Housing Units	97
Commercial Space (sq. ft)	61,000
Projected 2010 LRT Boardings	6,700
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.	
² 1985-95 average annual increase, based on sales prices recorded by King County Assessor and reported by zone category.	

RECENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Recent development activity, particularly in terms of expansions and renovations, in the First Hill station area includes:

- *Terry Tower.* Located at 1420 Terry Avenue, this 24-story high-rise is a luxury residential project that may include some low-income housing.
- *Institutional Development.* New construction and renovation at Virginia Mason and Swedish hospitals and Seattle University is underway.

Recent Development Projects

The parcels occupied by the medical community, Seattle University, area churches, high rise housing, and historic mansions are very stable, but there are areas in the First Hill station area with redevelopment potential:

- *Broadway Commercial Redevelopment.* The greatest potential for redevelopment is in the commercial areas. At the southern end of the Broadway commercial district are a number of underutilized parcels, many of which are automotive businesses (e.g., garages, an exotic car dealership). Along the north side of Madison are number of low-rise businesses and parking lots that also have potential for redevelopment.
- *Institutional Expansion.* Several of First Hill's major institutions are in various stages of expansion. The neighborhood's planning committee is examining opportunities for development, though they are aware that specific developments may raise issues of security, hours of operation, and/or access to medical centers. Several potential assisted-living projects are planned or underway in the station area, including the site of the former Cabrini Hospital.

RELATIVE STRENGTH OF DEVELOPMENT MARKETS IN THE FIRST HILL STATION AREA

Housing has the greatest market potential in the First Hill station area, based on existing land uses and market trends. Neighborhood retail also has the potential to attract new investment. Office development is seen as having less potential in this station area.

EXISTING PLANS AND ZONING

PLANNING CONTEXT

The First Hill station area is located primarily in the First Hill Urban Center Village. The Madison Street commercial district bisects the station area, which includes Virginia Mason and Swedish Hospitals and Seattle University. Historic resources located in the station area include St. James Cathedral and the Stimson-Green Mansion. A well-maintained public housing complex, Yesler Terrace, is located to the south of the station area.

ZONING

Zoning in the First Hill station area allows for multi-family, commercial/office, neighborhood-oriented retail, and mixed use residential uses. NC3 zones apply along the Madison

First Hill

Street commercial area, as well as in commercial areas along Broadway. The NC3 zone allows a wide variety of general commercial uses, including auto-oriented sales and services.

First Hill Station Area – Relative Market Strength¹	
	Ranking (5 high, 1 low)
Housing	4
Retail	3
Office	3
¹ Indicates relative strength of market type of station area, compared to other potential station areas. Ranking is based on rents, employment levels, vacancy rates, land values, recent development activity, stakeholder interviews, field observations, and other information.	

West of Broadway, with the exception of the Madison Street corridor, most areas are zoned for high-rise multi-family residential uses. This zoning allows for the most dense and tallest residential development in the city. Areas immediately east are zoned for MR mid-rise residential development. The Madison Street corridor includes a Pedestrian Overlay Zone.

The Major Institutional Overlay (MIO) applies additional regulations to development on the campus of Seattle University, as well as to the medical offices and facilities in the station area. Base districts for these institutional uses are consistent with other use patterns in the area: HR high-rise residential development west of Broadway, NC3 neighborhood commercial along Broadway, and MR mid-rise residential east of Broadway.

First Hill Station Area – Potential Development Under Current Zoning Regulations¹		
	Commercial (sq. ft)	Residential (units)
Existing Development	10,052,932	2,924
Additional Potential Development under Current Zoning Regulations ²	1,124,096	3,184
TOTAL	11,177,028	6,108
¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of station location.		
² Potential development capacity is based on City of Seattle GIS database and Scenario 2 in the “Zoned Development Capacity” background paper.		

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN ISSUES

Although no upzones have been proposed, the *First Hill Phase I Report* considers “zoning code changes . . . to allow more mixed use buildings and a wider variety of housing types.” The *Phase II Preliminary Recommendations* include a specific proposal to “increase housing and retail density along the north side of Madison Street.” (*First Hill Examiner*, May 1998).

The neighborhood plan also pays considerable attention to urban design to protect First Hill's many historic resources. The plan suggests street improvements on Madison that highlight the pedestrian-oriented nature of the area and development of a park near the station area. The community wants station entrances to be visible to pedestrians.

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

The community is interested in linking the light rail station with the major institutions in the station area, including Seattle University and medical uses. Stakeholders have expressed concerns about parking, traffic, commercial services for residents, community facilities, such as open space. Specific comments include the following:

- *Connection to Institutions.* "The station will be a major benefit to major institutions and their employees."
- *Open Space.* "Open space is needed, particularly as blocks on the outskirts of First Hill (that are zoned for dense development, but currently have many single-family homes) become more dense."
- *Retail for Residents.* "First Hill needs increased retail for residents. Hopefully, pedestrian activity from rail will increase business numbers and hours."

STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY SITES

The First Hill station area has 64 parcels and nearly 22 acres of land available for development. These represent vacant and underutilized parcels.

Zoning for Opportunity Sites

Most opportunity sites are found in MIO-HR and NC3 zones located in areas west of Broadway and throughout the Madison Street commercial area. These zones allow for very high-density multi-family development. Mixed use development is possible in NC3 zones, which represents approximately 8.9 acres of the total opportunity sites. Limited commercial uses are also allowed at the street level in HR and many MR areas.

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

Opportunity sites are typically larger than those in station areas to the north (including Capitol Hill and the University District) and may be large enough to accommodate the type of high-density development for which the area is zoned. Opportunity sites range in size from 0.20 to 0.37 acres in the NC3 zone, and average 0.44 acres in the HR zone. Residential and commercial development can fill in these parcels. In the HR zone, in particular, opportunity sites average 0.44 acres, which can easily permit high-rise development.

First Hill Station Area – Opportunity Sites by Zoning Designation¹		
	<i>Parcels</i>	<i>Acreage²</i>
NC3-65	16	3.11
NC3-85	3	0.57
MIO-MR	2	0.23
MIO-HR	29	12.66
NC3-160	14	5.24
TOTAL	64	21.81

¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.
² Based on City of Seattle GIS database.

Pedestrian-oriented development and mixed use may be supported in the local residential market. The existing urban form and land use patterns already allow for walking throughout the neighborhood, and commercial uses and residential uses are located within walking distance. Building housing over ground-floor commercial uses would be compatible with the existing neighborhood.

The main barriers to pedestrian-supportive development are aspects of the zoning regulations. NC3 zones allow incentives for mixed use, but because these provisions are applicable throughout the zone, they do not focus incentives to sites with better transportation access. Because incentives are not focused, developers would have no reason to develop closer to a transit station. In addition, because NC3 zones offer flexibility in the types of commercial uses allowed, transit-oriented development may require additional restrictions on auto-oriented uses.

STATION AREA FORECASTS

Three different forecasts were developed for the new population, employment, dwelling units, and commercial floor area that will be added to the station area by 2020:

1. “Without light rail transit;”
2. “With light rail transit, but without supportive land use policies;” and
3. “With both light rail transit *and* supportive land use policies.”

POPULATION AND HOUSING

As with the other station areas in the Capitol Hill market segment, the PSRC Trends forecast and the *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation forecasts differ in the First Hill station area by a factor of almost ten. While the *Comprehensive Plan* Extrapolation resulted in 2,043 units, a probable baseline is 300 dwelling units housing 450 people. This forecast does not include the

new dormitories under construction at Seattle University because they are just outside the station area. As evidence of demand for new housing, there are existing permit applications to build 97 new housing units in the station area. Given the demand for housing in this area, more units could be built if developers could acquire adequate sites for multi-family development. In this station area, housing also has more competition with hospitals and other institutions for available sites.

As with other nearby station areas, the introduction of rail by itself will add an amenity that will tend to increase the demand for housing in the area on the order of 50%. With “light rail only,” the station area is expected to grow by 320 units in 2020, adding 480 residents to the area.

EMPLOYMENT AND COMMERCIAL FLOOR AREA

The two forecasts range between 769,000 and 828,000 square feet of new commercial floor area over the next twenty years; the midpoint of 800,000 square feet represents an 8% increase in the existing level of commercial space. The station area currently exhibits many features of a transit-oriented area, including a mix of retail, office, and housing at densities over 30 units per acre. By improving transit access with a light rail station, a total of 840,000 square feet of new office/retail space and 2,800 new employees are expected to be added to the area by 2020.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL

“Rail without supportive policies” will likely increase the multi-family housing and retail uses in the First Hill station area on the order of 5%. Given the existing transit-orientation of the area and good pedestrian links, “rail by itself” would tend to create similar development with a greater concentration in the immediate vicinity of the station. Demand for housing in this neighborhood is strong because of the proximity to Downtown and urban amenities. Given the constraints on available sites for development, the effect of “light rail without supportive policies” would likely be minimal.

LAND USE IMPACTS OF LIGHT RAIL WITH SUPPORTIVE POLICIES

The potential development strategies for this station area focus on providing incentives in the zoning code for mixed use transit-oriented development and developing a parking management plan. Since the station area is already a strong mixed use environment, any economic and financial assistance should be limited to providing affordable housing. These strategies, combined with expedited permitting and SEPA clearance for transit-oriented development projects, could boost the development of opportunity sites to approximately 20% of their zoned capacity, adding an additional 600 dwelling units to the area. Given the established plans of the area’s institutions, supportive strategies would not have a strong impact on non-residential floor area beyond what is in the “rail only” forecast.

First Hill Station Area – Market Forecasts, 1997-2020¹				
	<u>1997</u>	<u>1997-2020 Growth</u>		
		<i>Without LRT</i>	<i>With LRT Only</i>	<i>LRT and Supportive Policies</i>
Population	3,756	450	480	1,350
Dwelling Units	2,924	300	320	900
Employment	14,073	2,670	2,800	2,800
Commercial Floor Area ²	10,052	800	840	840

¹ Within a ¼-mile radius of the station location.

² Square footage (in thousands); includes commercial, industrial and institutional space, but excludes Sound Transit facilities and public facilities.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Potential development strategies focus on creating a high-density, mixed use node around the transit station that complements existing use in the First Hill station area. Higher density development can potentially support use of the transit station, and parking management, measures for pedestrian connection, and local transit service can also help support transit use. The overall approach for development strategies can be summarized as follows:

- *Increased Density.* Increased densities for both residential and retail uses can create a compact mixture of uses that can support transit use. Currently, a FAR of 7.0 is permitted for mixed-use development in the NC3-160 zone north of Madison Street. The proposed FAR increase is for residential use only, with a corresponding increase in height. The high-rise residential zone a block north of Madison has a maximum height of 240, with no limit on density other than the limits imposed by height and bulk standards.
- *Pedestrian Connections.* Potential expansion of the Madison Street POZ could support transit use. Streetscape improvements, lighting, and bus shelters could provide better pedestrian access, particularly between the station and Seattle University.
- *Limitations on Auto-Oriented Uses.* Limitations on auto-oriented uses can allow for the development of more pedestrian-supportive uses and development in the station area. Auto-oriented uses in NC zones are already limited by the POZ provisions. Expansion of these zones would further restrict auto-oriented uses in the station area.
- *Parking Management.* Parking maximums and reduced standards near the transit station can help control the availability of parking and, therefore, encourage non-automobile modes of travel. Shared facilities for retail and institutional uses may be possible. The major employers in the area (hospitals, Seattle University) are subject to MIO provisions, including requirements for transportation management programs. Parking strategies for the First Hill station area should build off the transportation management programs of these major institutions.

The table of potential development strategies on the next page shows high-priority and recommended actions for the First Hill station area. Because the local real estate market is

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strong, it may not be necessary to use economic assistance or pilot projects to stimulate development. Coordination with local institutions, however, can help coordinate campus and institutional planning with local business planning and light rail station area planning.

Potential Development Strategies: First Hill (10)

Strategy	Potential Action	Comments
Land Use Tools	●	Consider upzones to allow increased densities in NC3 commercial zones on north side of Madison and on Madison east of Broadway.
Pedestrian Network	✓ / ●	Existing POZ on Madison; potential expansion can support TOD to the northeast; improve pedestrian linkages with Seattle University and provide wider sidewalks, streetscape amenities, lighting, and bus shelters, especially on Madison.
Parking Management	✓ / ●	Expand residential parking zone; consider establishing parking “lids” and reduce number of spaces required; explore opportunities for shared parking.
Economics/Financial Assistance	?	Establish CDC to help finance affordable housing.
Regulatory Process	?	Provide expedited review/SEPA clearance for TOD projects.
Local Transit Service	●	Improve bus circulation without adversely affecting pedestrian streets, especially east and south-east of Central Area routes.
Development Partnerships	○	First Hill Marketing Strategy as recommended in the neighborhood plan can help local businesses; Institutions can serve as potential partners, especially Seattle University and Swedish Medical Center redevelopment opportunities near Broadway.
Pilot Projects	?	

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ✓ = Supportive Policy/Program in Place | TOD = Transit-Oriented Development |
| ● = High Priority Action | POZ = Pedestrian Overlay Zone |
| ○ = Recommended Action | RPZ = Residential Parking Zone |
| ? = Further Study Required | |

